

2000s

Duane M. Abel, BA'02, a cartoonist, has produced a comic strip called, "Zed," for roughly 28 years. It appears in 50 weekly newspapers across the country. He also travels to schools, presenting an elementary school assembly program called "Draw Your Destiny," which showcases goal setting, the value of literacy and the importance of education, with the four words to success: work, study, learn, and try. He is a proud member of the National Cartoonists Society. Most recently, *THE GREEN OAK GUARDIAN*, a feature film and his screen writing debut, was just released on Amazon and Tubi.



Dragana Crnjak, BFA '02, was recognized for achievement by The University of Akron's Buchtel College and Mary Schiller Myers School of Art for winning a 2023 Ohio Arts Council Award.

Tracy S. Dowe, III, BSBA '01, city president and middle market team leader at Fifth Third Bank, has been appointed to the Board of Directors for the Akron Community Foundation.



Rachel A. Forchione, MA '08, serves as the first female director for the City of Canton's Civil Service Department.

Meghan L. Guegold Hege, BM '08, joined The Cleveland Orchestra in July 2023. Guegold Hege was principal horn of the Akron and Canton Symphony Orchestras and frequently performed with The Cleveland Orchestra as a substitute player for the past 13 years. Guegold Hege has also performed with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the Florida Orchestra, and the ProMusica Chamber Orchestra of



Columbus. Her orchestral studies started before her senior year of high school as a member of the horn section of The Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra. Guegold Hege was a recipient of a Presser Foundation Scholarship at Akron, a winner in two Tuesday Musical Association scholarship competitions, and was a featured soloist with the Akron and Canton Symphony Orchestras.

Michael J. Hixenbaugh, BA '07, won the top prize for best education beat reporter in the country at Education Writers Association (EWA) for 2023.



Amanda M. Leffler, JD '02, has been named the Akron managing partner for Toledo-based law firm Shumaker. Shumaker is opening an office in Akron following the acquisition of a dozen people from Brouse McDowell's insurance recovery group. The acquisition of those people, effective May 15, largely was motivated by the business' efforts to grow its existing insurance recovery practice. The new office will be led by Leffler, who had been with Brouse McDowell.

Michelle D. Vaughan, MA '01, PhD '07, has been named a Fellow of Division 44 (Society for the Scientific Study of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity) the American Psychological Association, and promoted to Clinical Full Professor within Wright State University's School of Professional Psychology in Dayton, Ohio. Vaughan's first book, *The Handbook of Consensual Non-Monogamy Affirming Mental Health Practice*, was recently published by Roman & Littlefield.



Casey J. Vogt, BFA '04, was recognized for achievement by The University of Akron's Buchtel College and Mary Schiller Myers School of Art for winning a 2023 Ohio Arts Council Award.

Sarah C. Vojtek, BSE '05, MBA '08, has been named the new CEO at Stewart's Caring Place, which provides free support services and programs for individuals and families dealing with cancer. Vojtek brings a wealth of experience in nonprofit leadership and a deep commitment to serving the community. With over 15 years of experience in the nonprofit sector, she has a proven track record of creating impactful programs and fostering meaningful connections within the community.



Lidia V. Carr, J.D. '01, joined the law firm, Wickens Herzer Panza Co., as an attorney in the firm's Estate Planning and Probate Department. Carr focuses her practice on estate planning, business succession and tax planning, estate and trust administration and probate matters. Carr is also fluent in Russian.



Amber R. Genet Barkoukis, B.A. '06, M.A. '14, was named executive director of Embracing Futures, Inc., a charity serving children since 1946. The company offers orthodontic care and oral health education in Summit, Stark, Portage, Medina and Wayne counties in Ohio by providing financial assistance for orthodontic and other dental care to low-income families.



Mark S. Klettlinger, B.A. '04, was named director of Lending at Ohio Statewide Development Corporation (OSDC). OSDC is a certified development corporation located in Columbus, which promotes business investment and job creation through SBA and Ohio 166 loan programs for building and equipment.

Brent A. Teague, B.S.B.A. '05, was recently recognized in Crain's Notable Leaders in Finance 2024 cohort. Teague is currently managing partner at Financial Wellness Partners in Beachwood, Ohio.



Michelle D. Vaughan, M.A. '01, Ph.D. '07, has been awarded Fellow status in American Psychological Association Division 44 and has also been promoted to clinical full professor within Wright State University's School of Professional Psychology. Vaughan teaches, supervises and serves on dissertation committees for doctoral students in WSU's APA-approved clinical psychology Psy.D. Program. Her scholarship and practice focus on LGBTQ+ and CNM (consensual non-monogamy) strengths/affirming practice and includes the publication of the handbook for CNM-Affirming Mental Health Practice by Rowman & Littlefield/Bloomsbury.

Matthew A. Williams, B.A. '00, M.P.A. '05, was honored with a \$10,000 scholarship from Bank of America's Supplier Diversity and Small & Diverse Business Scholarship Program in recognition of his role as the owner of an emerging service-disabled and veteran-owned small business entrepreneur, and business owner. Williams is the owner and president of Purchinex, LLC, headquartered in Ochlocknee, Ga.